THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes.

(b) Details of existing bilateral treaties under review/consideration for review:—

I. Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement/Convention with China, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan;

II. Visa Agreement and Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974 with Pakistan;

III. Indo-Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950;

IV. Bilateral Air Services Agreement with Singapore;

V. Periodic review of the comprehensive economic cooperation agreement with Singapore.

(c) and (d) A review of bilateral treaties is undertaken, where possible, to address new situations and realities so that the basic purposes of a treaty are safeguarded and our national interest is protected and promoted.

Discussion on visit of Nepalese PM

797. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister of Nepal has recently visited India and held discussions with various leaders;

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held and outcome thereof;

(c) whether the Government of Nepal have agreed to extend help to fight terrorism and Naxal; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes.

(b) Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal, Prime Minister of Nepal, paid an official visit to India from 18-22 August, 2009. The Prime Minister of Nepal called on the President of India and the Vice-President of India. He had meetings with Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Finance and Minister of Home Affairs. Discussion were held on issues of mutual interest and concern and both sides expressed their satisfaction at the state of bilateral relations between the two countries and resolved to work together to further strengthen and enhance cooperation consistent with the wishes and aspirations of the people of both the countries. They also reaffirmed their determination to consolidate and expand the areas of cooperation with a view to taking the relationship to a new height on the basis of mutual respect, understanding and mutual benefit. During the visit, the Foreign Secretaries of India and Nepal signed an MoU regarding

continuation of Indian grant assistance for the Goitre control programme in Nepal. A Joint Press Statement was also issued during the visit.

(c) and (d) The Government of Nepal has assured that it would not allow its territory to be used for any activity against India. It has also been agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation to effectively address all issues concerning security, including cross border crime, through existing bilateral mechanisms.

Privatization of passport offices

798. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the passport offices were deprived of the software which were provided to TATA;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the whole work related to Passport Issuance System is proposed to be done by the private contractor and the passport employees would be given the job of verifying the work done by private workers; and

(d) if so, the reason for Government going in for privatization of passport offices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) No.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) and (d) No. All non-sovereign and non-sensitive functions involving issuance of tokens, initial scrutiny of application, capture of photo and finger prints, scanning of documents and acceptance of fee will be performed by the employees of the Service Provider while sovereign and sensitive functions such as actual verification of documents with originals and the granting, printing and dispatch of passports will be performed by Central Passport Organisation (CPO) employees.

Indo-Pak meeting

799. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indo-Pak talks was held in the recent past;

(b) if so, the details of various issues discussed in the said meeting;

(c) the reactions of Pakistan on the points raised by India;

(d) the details of the decision taken on the occasion; and

(e) the mutual benefits likely to accrue as a result of these talks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SHASHI THAROOR): (a) Yes. The External Affairs Minister (EAM) met Pakistan Foreign Minister (FM) Shah Mahmood Qureshi on September 27, 2009 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA. This